

This note offers a suggestion regarding determination of eligibility criteria for Universal service program for rural health providers.

Consider using the Office of Rural Health Policy's system that incorporates RUCA codes to determine eligibility. I work at a 34 bed hospital in Buffalo, Minnesota that serves 17 communities that lay in the rural space between the outer-ring suburbs of Minneapolis and St. Cloud. Obviously, patients close to the metro areas go to metro hospitals, which have every type of specialist available at any hour. Our hospital serves those patients that cannot travel the distance to a metropolitan hospital for care. The Office of Rural Health Policy's RUCA codes considers us a rural zip code because it takes into account the realities across our country where 100 miles of wide open plain separate the outer ring suburbs of two metropolitan areas and those very small communities that lay across those plains are very rural and without access to services available in metropolitan areas.

Thank you.